Evaluation of the Settlement Program

Executive Summary

Research and Evaluation

Evaluation Division

November 2017

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada

Technical Appendices are available upon request to Research-Recherche@cic.gc.ca.

Ci4-175/2018E-PDF
978-0-660-24707-6

Reference Number: E2-2016

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Settlement Program. The evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the Treasury Board Policy on Results and section 42.1 of the *Financial Administration Act* and covered the period of fiscal (FY) years 2011/12 - 2016/17.

Overview of the Settlement Program:

IRCC's Settlement Program aims to support newcomers' successful settlement and integration so that they may participate and contribute in various aspects of Canadian life.[1] Through contribution agreements, IRCC funds service provider organizations (SPO), such as immigrant-serving agencies, social service organizations or educational institutions to provide settlement services to newcomers under six main areas (Needs Assessments and Referrals, Information and Orientation, Language Assessments, Language Training, Employment-Related Services and Community Connections). The Settlement Program also funds six support services (i.e., Care for Newcomer Children, Transportation, Translation, Interpretation, Disability Support and Crisis Counselling) to help facilitate access to settlement programming as well as Indirect Services that support the development of partnerships, capacity-building and the sharing of best practices among Settlement service providers. Furthermore, as an essential part of the Settlement Program, IRCC engages provinces/territories, civil society, businesses and other stakeholders such as employer associations, sector councils, and credentialing bodies to mobilize resources to deliver responsive and coordinated settlement and non-settlement services to newcomers.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations:

The Settlement Program has been effective at meeting a growing demand as service usage has risen over recent years, providing settlement services to more and more newcomers along their integration path. In addition, Settlement services coverage is widespread, with IRCC-funded SPOs offering permanent and itinerant Settlement services in all provinces and territories, both rural and urban centres within IRCC's jurisdiction.

Overall, the main expected outcomes for the program are being met. Clients are having their settlement needs assessed, receiving referrals to appropriate services, and are increasing knowledge and skills to help them integrate into Canadian society. Specifically, the evaluation found that the majority of settlement clients are: gaining knowledge about life in Canada, improving their language ability, using official languages, acquiring knowledge about working in Canada, finding employment, forming connections to communities and public institutions, participating in the broader community and making informed decisions. Finally, the evaluation found that the management of the Settlement Program effectively supports program delivery.

The evaluation was able to assess the unique impact of Settlement Services on achieving client outcomes and found that each of the specific Settlement Program streams contributed to different client outcomes with varying degrees. Employment-related Services were found to positively impact the most client outcomes, including several beyond gaining knowledge of the Canadian work environment, whereas taking IRCC-funded Language Training, Information and Orientation, or Community Connections impacted fewer expected client outcomes.

The evaluation also found that the impact of Settlement Services was affected by client type, as, in general, clients with higher human capital (i.e., economic immigrants, those with a university

[1] Since FY 2014/15, IRCC has been responsible for the management of settlement services in all provinces and territories outside Quebec.

degree or those with reported knowledge of English and/or French upon admission) derived greater benefits from IRCC-funded Settlement Services compared to other clients without these characteristics. This points to the need to ensure the proper balance among program components and to tie outcomes more specifically to the profile of different client groups.

The evaluation also found that IRCC-funded Local Immigration Partnerships has broadened community collaboration on, and profile of, newcomer issues by effectively engaging non-traditional newcomer service providers. Finally, the provision of six support services were found to be integral for ensuring that newcomers are able to access IRCC-funded settlement services.

Some areas for program improvements have been identified, and as such, this evaluation report proposes the following recommendations.

Language Training: Language training is helping newcomers improve their language skill, but not in the same way for all clients and not all skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking). Examining in more depth Settlement clients' language learning needs, motivations and objectives, as well as the effectiveness of different language training delivery models used by service providers, will allow the Department to better determine what works for who and under what conditions and adjust its language training accordingly.

Recommendation 1: IRCC should review and assess its language training delivery and implement appropriate changes to improve its effectiveness. The assessment should:

- consider the needs of different groups of learners, and respective determinants of success;
- build on the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches (curricula, modes of training, etc.);
- leverage best practices from adult education theory and practice, and the field of teaching English and French as a second language to adults; and,
- consider new and innovative approaches to language training for adult immigrants.

Employment-Related Services: The evaluation showed that Employment-Related Services have the most widespread positive impact on client outcomes, including, among others, improved language skills and use, gaining knowledge of the Canadian work environment, and helping clients learn more about life in Canada.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should develop and implement a plan to optimize the benefits of its Employment-Related Services and employment-specific language training.

Prioritization of services: Client needs and settlement objectives vary greatly, and the evaluation found that clients from different immigration categories and socio-demographic characteristics were taking differing amounts of time to achieve similar results. As such, there should be consideration given to exploring the prioritization of and access to services for clients while balancing needs and costs.

Recommendation 3: IRCC should review access to and duration of Settlement services and implement appropriate changes that achieve a balance between meeting the specific needs of different clients and available resources.

Support Services: Overall, there is a need for Support Services, as they enable clients to access the Settlement services necessary to assist in their integration journey. Some newcomers also need certain support services to access community or mainstream (non-Settlement Program) services that are not funded by IRCC and there are challenges with providing support for mental health issues through crisis counselling and in addressing clients' support service needs beyond

what IRCC funds. Finally, due to limited tracking, it is difficult to quantify the full cost of providing support services.

Recommendation 4: IRCC should clarify the Department's expectations regarding the provision, use and reporting of Support Services. Specifically, the Department should review and clarify:

- the approach to the use of specific Support Services to access community services not funded by IRCC, and update and promote guidance as appropriate;
- the expectations regarding the provision of crisis counselling and clearly articulate what SPOs should be providing to clients as part of this particular Support Service; and,
- the financial and reporting requirements regarding Support Services to determine what needs to be tracked, and subsequently develop and issue new guidance and adjust financial reporting procedures as needed.

Local Immigration Partnerships: LIPs have made notable achievements, particularly in the areas of locally-relevant research, information sharing, partnership-building, and strategic planning. However, the current funding criteria and structure for LIPs may not be the appropriate model for certain communities. Challenges for LIPs in securing sustainable funding pose a risk to implementing strategic plan activities and projects. Finally, there is room for greater sharing of information between them and other LIPs, as well as IRCC.

Recommendation 5: IRCC should develop and implement a strategic plan to make best use of the potential contributions of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) to settlement and integration outcomes of immigrants and refugees. This plan should at the least:

- articulate its vision, expectations, rationale and role for supporting LIPs;
- confirm and communicate the criteria for funding new and existing LIPs; and,
- facilitate networking and knowledge sharing among LIPs by leveraging and disseminating research results and best practices generated by LIPs.

Data Systems: There are opportunities to examine the various data systems as a whole to ensure they work well together by allowing the department and external stakeholders to obtain the necessary information needed to support decision making while reducing reporting burden. In addition, repeating the client outcome survey developed as part of the evaluation and also administering it to a comparison group of non-users would allow the Department to augment its capacity to measure client outcomes.

Recommendation 6: IRCC should review its reporting requirements and systems for the Settlement Program and implement changes to streamline data collection and enhance analytical tools as required.

Recommendation 7: To strengthen its client outcomes data, IRCC should administer an outcomes survey on an ongoing basis to settlement users and non-users.